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SUBJECT: MONITORING AND EVALUATION REPORT FOR THE AMERICAN
REFUGEE COMMITTEE (ARC) IN LIBERIA: SPRMCO06CA061

¶1. Summary: The Abidjan-based Refugee Coordinator (RefCoord) for West Africa traveled to Liberia from May 1-11 to conduct a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) assessment of the American Refugee Committee's (ARC) PRM-funded project, "Supporting Sustainable Return, Reintegration and Stabilization of Liberian Communities." RefCoord met with ARC staff in Monrovia and visited project sites in Gbarnga, Foequelleh, Bellemu, Garmue, Gbarngasiaquelleh, Gbalatuah, Voinjama, Kolahun, and Foya. ARC appears to be largely on target to meet their objectives for the current project cycle, although ARC needs to reduce the number of indicators in any follow-up project. PRM should encourage ARC to strengthen its presence in Lofa County and improve security conditions for ARC employees operating in that region. End Summary.

¶2. The Abidjan-based Refugee Coordinator (RefCoord) for West Africa traveled to Liberia from May 1-11 to conduct a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) assessment of the American Refugee Committee's (ARC) PRM-funded project, "Supporting Sustainable Return, Reintegration and Stabilization of Liberian Communities." RefCoord met with ARC staff in Monrovia and visited project sites in Gbarnga, Foequelleh, Bellemu, Garmue, Gbarngasiaquelleh, Gbalatuah, Voinjama, Kolahun, and Foya. RefCoord met with ARC staff Paula Nawrocki (Country Director), Dawn Dahlke (Program Liaison Officer), Saad Karim (Program Development Officer), Cherno Diallo (Head of Gbarnga Field Office), Marie Kalinke (ARC GBV Officer), Krishna Acharya (MED Program Coordinator, Gbarnga), Isaac Duaneh (LOSAC Project Coordinator, Gbarnga), Lansana Camara (Tailoring Project Leader, Gbarnga), and numerous other local staff working with ARC's field offices in Gbarnga and Voinjama.

¶3. RefCoord also discussed ARC's program activities with Raouf Mazou, UNHCR Acting Representative, David Karp (UNHCR Gbarnga), Cesar Ortega (UNHCR Voinjama), Gray Zuu (LRRRC Bong County - Government Refugee Office), as well as other officials with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in collaboration with ARC.

OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS

¶4. OBJECTIVE 1: To support the sustainable return and reintegration of Liberian refugees and returnees and the stabilization of war affected communities through provision of business training, grants, loan and savings group facilitation, and loans that are designed to support the creation and growth of income-generating micro-enterprises.

Business Training and Grants:

- ARC has disbursed grants to just over 2,000 persons, but is not able to indicate how many have increased assets by 50% or how many will receive the second part of the grant;
- ARC believes they will have information on the percentage of beneficiaries who manage an active business by the end of the project and will include in the final report;
- ARC is above target for the percent of beneficiaries who are women;
- ARC states they are above target for the percent of beneficiaries who are returning refugees.

Loans and Savings Clubs (LOSACs):

- ARC is on target for the number of new and existing LOSACs created and managed;
- ARC will not meet indicators related to average group

savings or disbursements. Although ARC is reporting on a July-July project cycle, the LOSACs are managed on a January-December cycle and there is not sufficient time in the project to meet this indicator, although the LOSACs appear on target for the ARC cycle;

- RefCoord does not believe ARC can meet the indicator for group members passing post-curriculum literacy test.

Microfinance:

- ARC has decided not to provide micro-finance loans to 400 beneficiaries in Ganta. ARC reported their loan partner was not able to establish a functioning office in Ganta as had originally been planned. ARC Country Director told RefCoord on May 7 that they had identified a property and planned to set up the office by the end of July;
- ARC is on target to meet the indicator on repayment of

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monetary loans, although the 400 loans planned for Ganta are not included in this figure;

- ARC is on target to meet the indicator on female beneficiaries in their overall Microfinance activities, minus Ganta;
- ARC will not meet their indicator for the percent of beneficiaries who are returning refugees. This is mainly due to the decision not to provide MED loans in Ganta.

Coordination with Other MED Programs:

- ARC reports a 26 percent participation rate (above target) of former ARC clients from the refugee camps;
- ARC reports they are working with two local NGOs (target: 3), although ARC is also working with Liberty Finance for their loan activities, which would be a third local NGO partner.

15. OBJECTIVE 2: To promote peaceful reintegration of refugees into communities by raising awareness about gender-based violence (GBV), building capacity of GBV response service providers, and developing sustainable community-based strategies to prevent and respond to GBV in target areas.

Health:

- ARC reports they have met or will meet both indicators in the health sector.

Case Management and Protection:

- ARC is on target to meet their indicator on percent of Community Peers who pass post training tests in GBV prevention and response;
- ARC reports they will meet the indicator to provide ongoing holistic case management services;
- ARC reports they will meet the indicator on percent of ARC social workers who pass GBV response and refresher training in Month 1;
- ARC is not sure if they will meet the indicator on percent of service providers that pass GBV response and post-refresher training;
- ARC will meet their indicator on ARC staff and partner staff to pass SEA and ARC Code of Conduct training;
- ARC has only assisted 34 GBV survivors with safe house assistance (target 72) and only 38 survivors with material assistance to meet basic needs (target: 300). ARC was not sure why numbers were so low.

Legal/Justice:

- ARC reports they will meet the indicator on number of trainees the three counties who meet the goal of at least 80 percent improvement on post-test scores;
- ARC expects to meet the indicator on BCC materials produced and distributed. However, ARC reports to have done 92 posters against the indicator of 3. ARC staff explained they intended to do 3 themes, but the 92 posters appear to be for one theme. RefCoord requested ARC to be more explicit in their final report on this indicator;
- ARC expects to complete the assessments on increased human rights awareness in July;
- ARC has met their indicator on paralegal support to GBV survivors in all counties;
- ARC has or will meet the final two indicators in this heading by the end of the project.

Community Awareness:

- ARC's numbers on mass sensitization campaigns are extremely high compared to their second quarter report. RefCoord requested ARC to provide more detailed information on this indicator before the end of the project;

- ARC has exceeded the target for development of community support networks;
- ARC expects to meet their indicator on refresher training with community leaders;
- ARC expects to meet their indicator on community video teams and films produced.

Empowerment:

- RefCoord has asked ARC for further clarification of their indicator on building/identifying community centers;
- ARC will meet their indicator on the number of persons who

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will graduate from their 3-month Reproductive Health Literacy courses;

- ARC will meet their target on number of vulnerable school age GBV-survivors assisted.

PROGRAM ISSUES

16. Cross-cutting Goals: ARC's activities target communities and vulnerable women. RefCoord visited many of the LOSAC members and MED grant beneficiaries in Bong and Lofa County and noted the high percentage of female beneficiaries. ARC includes a capacity building component throughout its project activities, both with governmental partners and with the beneficiary communities.

17. Coordination: ARC works well with their other NGO partners, UNHCR, and their government counterparts, although UNHCR did voice complaints on their level of coordination in Nimba County. However, ARC did not implement their planned MED loan activities in Nimba as expected. This, and their rather narrow focus on working in Ganta might have played a factor in their level of coordination with the UNHCR office in Saclepea. UNHCR Gbarnga reported good coordination with ARC and works with ARC in a number of activities. ARC plans to expand their presence in Nimba County in the coming year. RefCoord encouraged ARC's Country Director to work with UNHCR to ensure coordination when identifying target communities of high return for their LOSAC and MED activities.

18. Effective Use of Funds: RefCoord's main complaint with ARC has been its slow arrival in areas of high refugee return, particularly Lofa County. The areas around Monrovia are well served by a number of non-governmental and international agencies. Although return numbers to Nimba County are moderate, there is still a reasonable expectation that refugees still residing in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire will return to this area. ARC should be encouraged to focus PRM-funded activities further away from Monrovia and further into areas of high refugee return/need, particularly in upper-Lofa County.

19. Sphere Standards: ARC does not apply Sphere standards in its GBV and MED activities.

10. Financial and Personnel Systems: ARC maintains strong financial and personnel systems. ARC reported a specific problem with tracking fuel consumption with some of their vehicles, but was able to uncover the problem through their record keeping and fired the concerned staff members. Staff are subjected to regular personnel appraisals and start with a three-month probation period. ARC also has a ten day no-show policy. ARC staff reported some turnover in the LOSAC program, some staff gaps in the micro-finance project, and the departure of several other field level staff that negatively impacted overall implementation (PRM and non-PRM activities) over the past year.

11. HQs Oversight: ARC reported frequent visits and strong oversight from their HQs.

12. Coordination with PRM: ARC coordinates well with PRM. However, that coordination tends to weaken at the mid-point of their projects, when ARC decides to change an important aspect of their program. For example, in the previous PRM-funded project ARC decided to switch suddenly the focus of their MED activities to a different county. In the current project, ARC decided not to pursue the MED loan activities in Nimba County at a similar stage and requested to withdraw from Vahun District for logistical reasons. The PRM visit in January was able to reverse this request and ARC has shown positive results in Vahun as a consequence. RefCoord suggests more frequent formal monitoring of ARC's projects to avoid late notice of unnecessary changes.

13. Security: ARC's Voinjama office was broken into in February and several items, including an ARC vehicle, were stolen. This was the second incident they experienced in Voinjama. The ARC office in Voinjama doubles as their staff

residence and the perpetrators apparently followed the staff back to the office at night in order to gain access to ARC's facilities. RefCoord visited the office and noted additional concertina wire had been added to the perimeter and interior wall, as well as perimeter lighting. However, the structure itself still remains in the middle of Nzerekore town whereas most NGOs have located their offices and residences slightly

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outside the center of Voinjama. ARC's Country Director said they are considering renting a second location to house their staff closer to other NGOs and away from their office space. RefCoord recommends that PRM support ARC's efforts to separate their office and residential space and should encourage ARC to ensure staff work/live in reasonably safe conditions.

¶14. Problems: ARC did not report any significant problems, although UNHCR complained their administrative fees for their MED program are high when compared to a similar program run by UNDP. This is true, although UNDP enjoys slightly different economies of scale with regard to covering administrative expenses for its projects. UNHCR Monrovia also reported that ARC was given a "poor" rating for their 2006 activities during an internal audit. UNHCR Gbarnga is working closely with ARC in several project areas and their Head of Office stated he was doing so only because he knew the ARC officer working with them personally and that he had a reputation for keeping very detailed records. RefCoord noted several areas of high personnel turnover in the last year but was impressed with some of the recently hired ARC staff. RefCoord discussed the need for closer monitoring of project activities with ARC's Country Director and suggested they try to reduce the number of indicators.

COMMENT

¶15. AC appears to be largely on target to meet its objectives for the current project cycle, although ARC needs to reduce the number of indicators in any follow-up project. As UNHCR's assisted repatriation deadline draws near, NGOs working in Liberia will need to focus their efforts to ensure basic levels of self-sufficiency in high return areas. ARC provides returnees and local communities with economic-based activities that offer alternatives to other forms of employment that often lead to exploitation and/or discrimination. At the same time, ARC needs to improve its own project monitoring and stabilize their staffing situation to ensure solid performance. Finally, although their GBV activities in and around Monrovia are generally well perceived, PRM should encourage ARC to strengthen its presence in Lofa County and improve security conditions for ARC employees operating in that region.

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